

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your letter about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which will lower electricity bills by 25 percent on average for all residential customers across the province and also benefit many small businesses and farms.

The Ontario government has a responsibility to raise awareness and communicate information about programs and services that affect Ontarians. This includes informing Ontarians of changes to their electricity so they can plan for the future as they manage their household budgets. The government is communicating these changes over a variety of channels, including these informational advertisements which drive Ontarians to a dedicated website (www.Ontario.ca/fairhydroplan) where they can learn more about what these changes mean to them.

On March 13, 2017, the Auditor General approved these advertisements, and found them to be in compliance with the *Government Advertising Act, 2004*.

I'll also take this opportunity to remind you that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to enact legislation that bans government-paid, politically partisan advertising and we remain the only one to have done so to date. Our government also strengthened legislation to provide a clearer definition of partisan advertising, requiring the government to submit a preliminary version of the ad to the Auditor General for review, and reinforce rules around government advertising during general elections. Under the legislation, a government ad can't include the name, voice or image of a member of the Executive Council or a member of the Assembly, include the name or logo of a party, or directly identify and criticize a recognized party or member of the assembly. This is to ensure another Mike Harris situation can't happen, where your party spent over \$400 million on highly partisan advertising, including government ads starring Mike Harris that attacked teachers and health care workers.

Further to this, I understand that you were an MP in former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government for almost ten years, which spent the following on government advertising:

- Over \$100 million advertising the Economic Action Plan including \$14.8 million in 2013 – long after the program had ended;
- \$2.5 million advertising a jobs program that didn't exist yet;
- \$7 million on health ads that were condemned by the Canadian Medical Association, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada;
- Spent an additional \$13.5 million on a single ad campaign promoting their budget which favours Canada's richest.

I can't recall seeing a letter written from you in all of those 10 years as they ran across the entire country. It's clear that you are attempting to deflect from the fact that you have absolutely no substantial plan to reduce electricity rates.

Unlike Conservatives, we will deliver relief for electricity users, and we will only advertise in a responsible way that promotes the public interest.

Thank you,

Hon. Liz Sandals
President of the Treasury Board